

# PLAIN TALKS

April 1992

Volume 71 Number 3

And  
they're  
off!

Lafayette museum  
shocks visitors

Have you vaccinated  
your computer?

Big catch  
at Lewis Creek



# PLAIN TALKS

April 1992 Volume 71 Number 3



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Thousands of runners, including several Gulf States employees, took to the streets of Houston to compete in the Houston-Tenneco Marathon last January. For more information, see page 3. Photo courtesy of Tenneco Inc.



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Employees who change residences or offices should fill out company mailing-address-forms (GSU0012-00-81) and return them to the mailroom in Edison Plaza. GSU publications, departmental mailings and other company information are not automatically forwarded; addresses must be corrected when employees move.



# Marathon runners go the distance

by Mike Rodgers

In 490 B.C., the army of ancient Greece faced the Persians near the Greek city of Marathon. According to tradition, after the battle, a long-distance runner carried news of the Greek victory to Athens, 26 miles and 385 yards away.

Although the name of that intrepid runner is lost in the mists of history, modern long-distance runners still trek the same distance through city streets. Rather than carry news of a military victory, these marathoners are celebrating a personal triumph — crossing the finish line.

In January, a small group of dedicated GSUers put on their running shoes and challenged themselves to finish the Houston Tenneco Marathon, held annually in the Bayou City.

GSU's Pam Grossman, Steve Kilcrease, Rupert Ellis, Dave Walston, Tom Goth and Craig Lee participated. For Grossman, a senior stenographer, and Kilcrease, associate forecasting analyst, this year's event was their first marathon. "I started training for it last summer," says Grossman, adding, "I really had no idea how to train for a marathon." She had been a runner for ten years before deciding to tackle the big one. Kilcrease, a jogger since the mid-1980s, notes, "I never imagined myself running a marathon."

Grossman and Kilcrease concur on the reasons they are runners. "It's a stress release, a mental and physical challenge," she says. Both enjoy being outdoors and maintain that running is responsible for their slender waistlines. Each approached the marathon with some apprehension. In



Kilcrease's case, it was a fear that he hadn't properly trained. Grossman was concerned about some of the horror stories she had heard about people having difficulty running the distance. Happily, their fears proved groundless and the marathon proved to be a pleasant and memorable experience.

"It was a lot of fun running with 3,000 other people," says Kilcrease, who finished in three hours, 22 minutes and 31 seconds. He points out that runners could get fluids to drink at every mile along the 26-mile course. Running, even in the cooler January temperatures, uses up bodily fluids rapidly. For Grossman, the support of her family and friends was a big boost as she pounded the pavement through Houston. "They shouted at me from several mile markers along the route and helped me keep going." Her finishing time was four hours, four minutes and six seconds.

Marathon training is rigorous and calls for following a careful regimen. Kilcrease says it took over his life. "I planned everything around running." Training can also use up shoes quickly. He went through two pairs of running shoes in six months of hard exercise.

Looking to the future, Grossman hasn't decided whether or not to run the Houston Tenneco Marathon again. For the time being, she wants to jog for fun and resume her evening studies at Lamar University, where she's working toward a degree in business. Kilcrease hopes to run again in Houston and perhaps tackle the Dallas Marathon as well.



*Top, Grossman (center with hands raised) keeps pace through downtown Houston. Above, After months of preparation, Grossman and Kilcrease are ready to compete in the marathon.*





*L to R, Georgiana Smith, Pointe Coupee Parish; Bill Benedetto, GSU; Joseph Callan, NRC; Mike Henry, Louisiana Radiation Protection Division and Bobbe Van Riper, Louisiana Office of Emergency Preparedness, field media questions during a recent JIC exercise.*

# Crisis Communication

*River Bend's Joint Information Center provides timely and accurate information in an emergency*

story by Scott Harper  
photos by Lynn Vairin

A news release from River Bend reads, "An alert was declared today at 10:07 a.m. at GSU's River Bend nuclear power plant." But four important words at the top of the sheet keep hundreds of emergency response people from going into action: THIS IS A DRILL.

The sample news release is just one part of the information produced by the Joint Information Center (JIC) at River Bend in an evaluated emergency exercise. The JIC is made up of all organizations that would produce information during an emergency at River Bend.

"The goal of the JIC is to provide accurate, timely information to the public through the media," says Kerry Zimmermann, senior nuclear communications specialist, River Bend. "All agencies that would release information work from one location in order to share information, brief the media and control rumors."

Agencies involved with the River Bend JIC include representatives from five surrounding parishes (East and West Baton Rouge, East and West Feliciana and Pointe Coupee), the Louisiana Governor's Office, Louisiana Office of Emergency Preparedness, Louisiana Radiation Protection Division, Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and GSU.

"We provide spokesperson training for the individuals who will be facing the media," says Zimmermann. The parish representatives are community volunteers who also receive briefing on the basics of nuclear power. These volunteers are at the heart of the operation's success.

Four emergency levels can be declared at River Bend:





Above, Media Phone Team members Nikki DeFelice (writing), Charlotte Odom (l), Claudia Hurst (r) and Becky Watson (standing) help to control rumors during an emergency. Left, Joe Burton, GSU technical spokesperson, gets an update from the Events Information Team.

Notice of an Unusual Event, Alert, Site Area Emergency and General Emergency. The JIC is activated at the Alert stage.

According to Zimmermann, communicating with the public during an emergency is different from normal public relations communications.

"During an emergency, the communications goals change. We have a responsibility to the people who live around the power plant that we take very seriously. At the JIC, we do not control the information that goes out, but we do share our information with each other to protect our credibility," says Zimmermann. "If we communicate successfully, most people will follow the recommendations given to them by local, state and federal agencies."

Following the Three Mile Island accident in 1979, the NRC and FEMA required nuclear power plants to have a way to communicate accurately in an emergency and control rumors.

Once a year, the JIC is activated for a practice and NRC/FEMA-evaluated exercise. A scenario, created by contractors and known only by exercise controllers, is acted out whereby an accident occurs at the plant and spokespersons from the JIC field questions from role-playing media.

According to Zimmermann, the River Bend JIC is "one of the more advanced JICs in the country." Other agencies and industries who require a JIC have observed GSU in past exercises to learn how to set up their own.

"We really do have a good operation," concludes Zimmermann.



Workers replace siding damaged by high winds during severe weather on March 5.

## JIC preparation pays off

by Mark Viguet

At the River Bend nuclear power station early on the morning of March 5, high winds blew sheet metal siding off the turbine building and into a main transformer. A notification of unusual event was declared, and the reactor automatically and safely shut down.

Although it was not necessary for the Joint Information Center to be activated, a decision was made to quickly put the rumor control function into place and it "functioned beautifully," says Shivaun Davis, nuclear communications coordinator.

"Under state and federal guidelines, we weren't obligated to activate any part of the JIC, but because of the nature of the shutdown, we decided to activate rumor control," Davis says. "Phone banks were set up in St. Francisville and in Baton Rouge to handle inquiries."

Davis says phone team volunteers, who had been through practice exercises, were ready and willing to help.

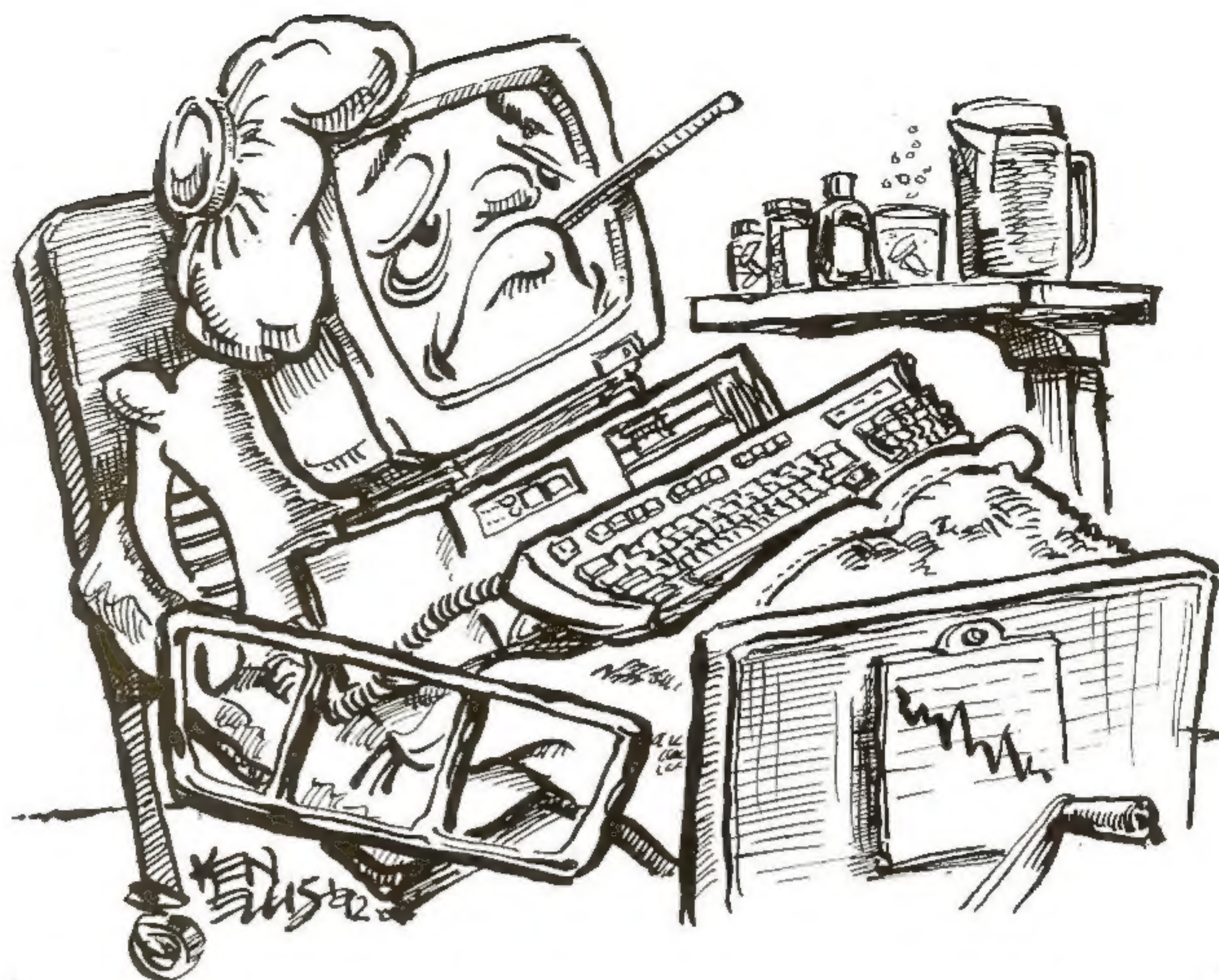
"It was a shock to call people and say, 'This is not a drill,'" Davis says. "We've wondered how the program would perform in a real emergency, and now we know. The program works."

The phone teams fielded a number of calls from employees and the public, providing regularly updated information on the plant.

"All the practicing and effort really paid off," Davis says. "We know all the work that goes into the JIC isn't in vain."



## Simple safeguards help immunize personal computers



by Mark Viguet

Your computer might be ill—and you may not know it. Viruses, hidden computer programs that under certain conditions damage information stored in computers, are a growing threat to companies like Gulf States.

Worldwide during 1991, new computer viruses were discovered almost daily. The number of known viruses today totals about 1,000. In a recent survey, more than 25 percent of U.S. companies reported they had a virus problem during 1990, with that percentage increasing to 40 percent in 1991. Some experts predict 90 percent of the companies surveyed will report problems in 1992.

Recent media attention has been focused on the Michaelangelo virus, which was programed to activate on the March 6 birthday of the Renaissance artist. The widespread information destruction predicted by some failed to materialize, partly because the advance publicity prompted many computer users to scan their systems with special anti-virus software. Usually, viruses aren't as well known as Michaelangelo; the only indication of an "infection" comes after the virus has damaged information.

Most viruses spread by attaching themselves to programs and files on diskettes that are used in infected machines. These diskettes are then shared with other computer users, infecting their machines and

any diskettes inserted into them.

With the proliferation of personal computers, and the viruses that infect them, it is important to know steps to take that will safeguard data.

- Make regular backup copies of information. Important program and data files should be copied in more than one location, or backed up, as they are created and modified. All files should be backed up once a month. If sensitive data is stored on a particular machine, make backups more frequently. If possible, create two backup copies and store one copy in another location.
- Use diskettes approved by management. Do not use "shareware" or borrowed software taken from electronic bulletin boards.
- Periodically, use a virus scan software program on your computer.
- If your computer does become infected, quarantine the machine so the virus will not be spread to other computers. Turn the machine off and contact the network center, 733-2170, at the first sign of a virus.

Following these steps will help protect GSU from costly damage caused by some computer virus infections.



# Customers rally at Pike's peak



*Gene Koci, Woodville superintendent, (center), makes a special presentation at Jamie Pike's retirement party, where an estimated 100 customers were in attendance.*

by Robert Adams

In addition to many employees, an estimated 100 customers attended a retirement party for Woodville's Jamie Pike in January. Pike retired from Gulf States after 41 years in the service and line departments.

The large number of customers attending his retirement party testifies to the type of person Pike is and the type of job he did for GSU.

"I always did the best job I could do," says Pike, who adds he received inspiration from C. R. Brinkley, a former supervisor.

Marie Carter, a Hillister customer, agrees that Pike did an outstanding job.

"He cares. He goes beyond what he's supposed to do," says Carter.

One Sunday morning, a squirrel shorted out the line feeding Carter's house and cut off her electricity. She could not even make coffee, she says.

"Jamie came out to repair the line and he even brought me some coffee. Then, he fixed the line so it couldn't happen again," says Carter.

"One other time, Jamie was driving by and he saw a fire in the field next to our house. He called the forest service and then personally kept the

"After a storm, Jamie would always check to see if the city's plants were in operation. He would probably have dug ditches if we had asked him to," says Davis.

Pike says his family shared his responsibility for service to the customer. "Most calls came to my house," Pike says. "When I was out after a storm, my wife would have to answer the phone. It was part of the job. Most people were real nice. She did what she could to get the right information to the people."

Both customers and employees contributed towards Pike's retirement gift. He received several gifts, including a \$50 gold piece and a Masonic bible.

Pike says his retirement party made him feel humble and great. He appreciated the effort of his co-workers.

"I always tried to do my best. The party made me feel like what I had done over the years was appreciated.

"I was raised on a farm and felt lucky to get a good job. GSU paid me, but I was working for the people. I always felt if I wasn't doing a good job, I shouldn't be there."

Pike has no specific plans for retirement other than to relax and enjoy life. He raises bees and likes to hunt rabbits with his dogs.

"I don't shoot the rabbits, though," he says. "I just like to listen to the dogs."



*Left to right, Carter, Pike and Davis in Woodville.*

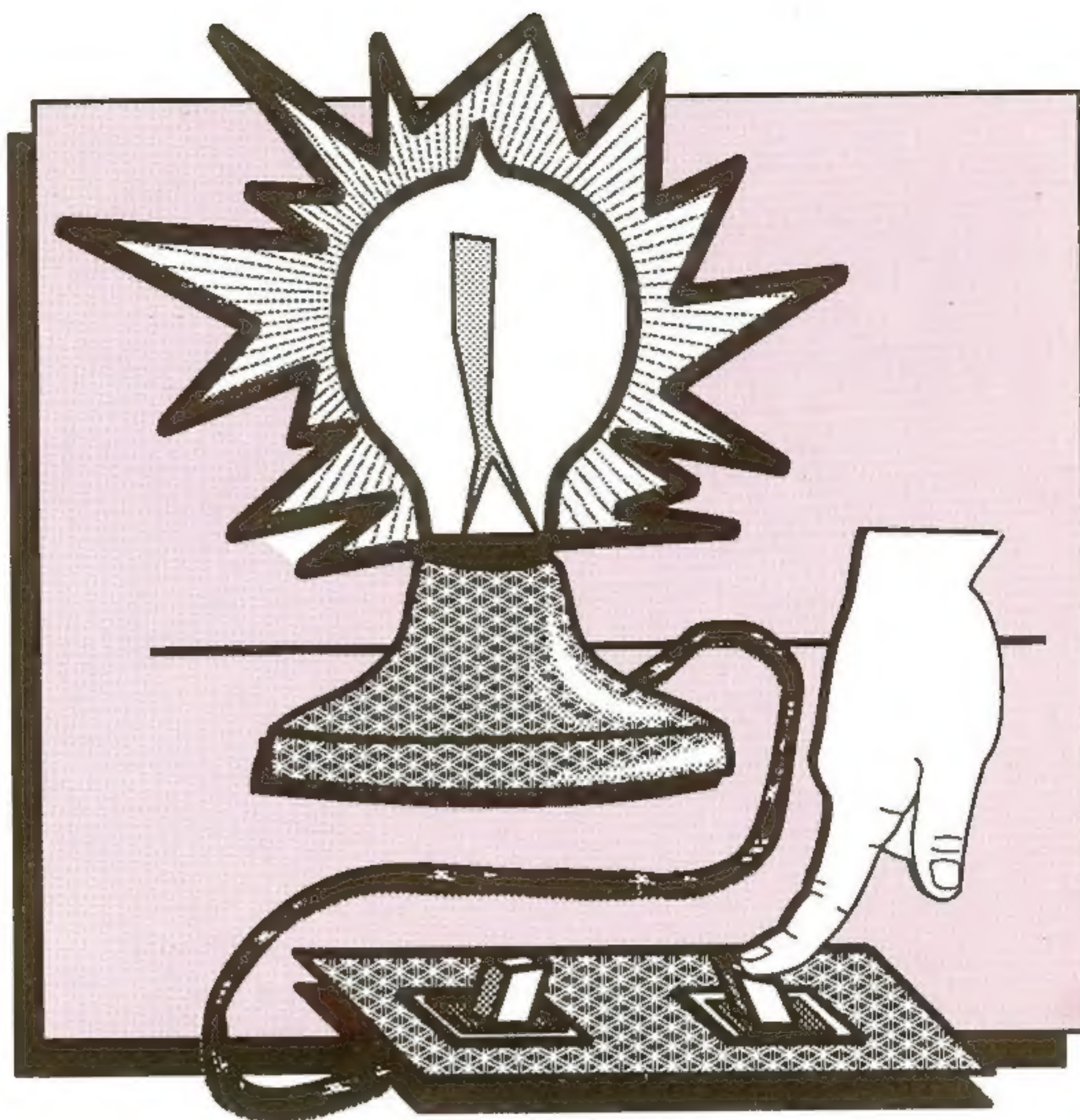
fire from burning our house. I've always been grateful to him for that," Carter says.

Walter Davis, retired from the City of Woodville, agrees with Carter.



# The power of the switch

story and photos by Scott Harper  
artwork by Linka Peveto



A young boy places two fingers on copper pieces connected to a hand-crank generator. Then he is instructed to turn the crank on the generator with his other hand, which delivers a shock to his two fingers on the copper plates. As the boy receives the shock, nerve impulses travel up his arm to his brain, which cause him to throw his head back, open his mouth and...giggle frantically!



*An energetic boy cranks an old World War II field generator that sends a current to a string of Christmas lights overhead.*

No, this is not a description of shock therapy in a 1920 mental institution, but rather one of many hands-on displays in the exhibit, "Electricity: The Power of the Switch," at the Lafayette Natural History Museum. The exhibit, which runs Feb. 6 — Aug. 2, is co-sponsored by Gulf States, Lafayette Utilities System (LUS) and Southwest Louisiana Electric Membership Corporation (SLEMCO).

According to Liz Duhon, customer information coordinator, Lafayette, museum staff contacted GSU

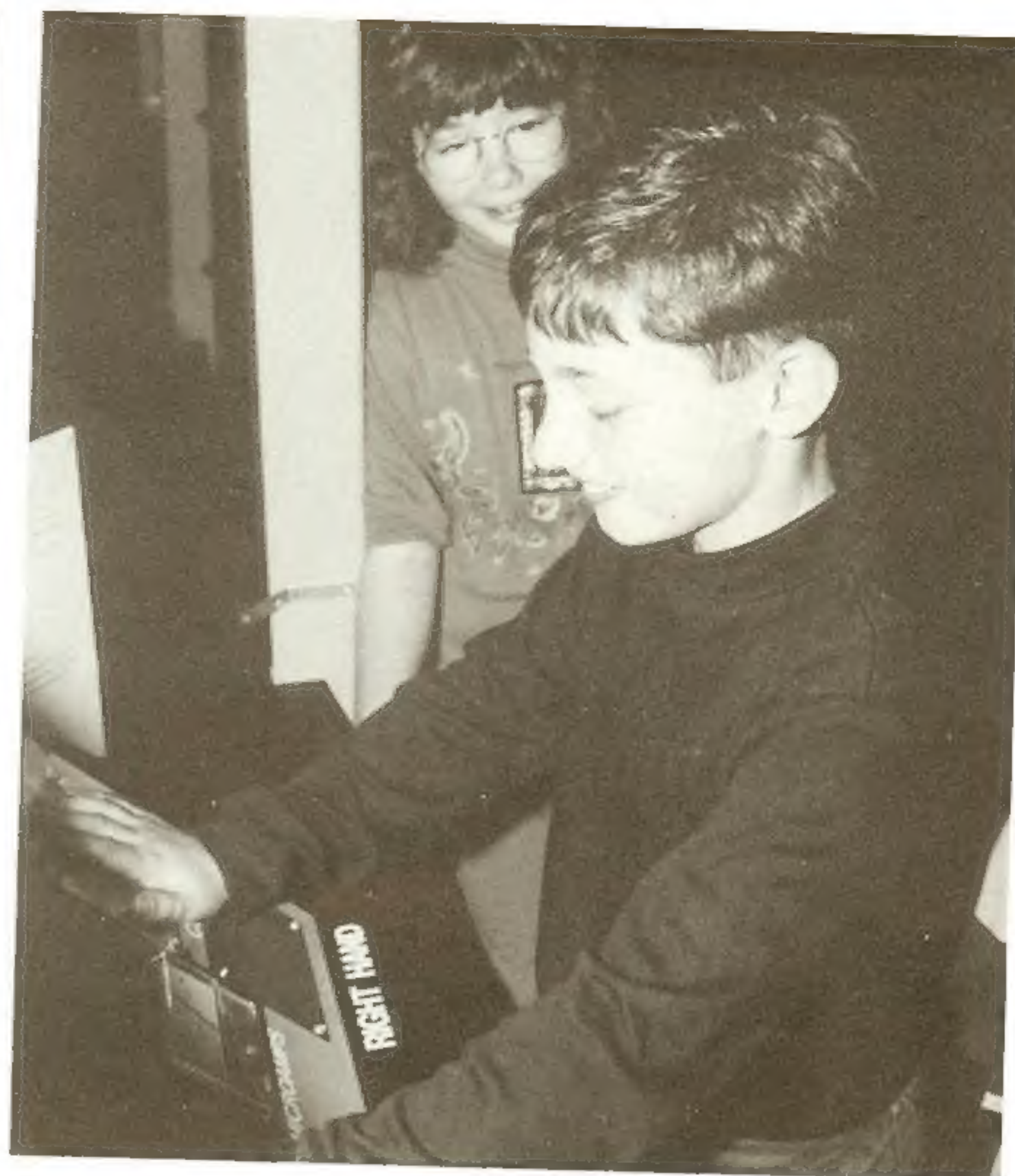
about being a sponsor of the exhibit. "We thought it was a good idea to get involved. It's a great public relations program."

Each year, the museum designs an exhibit around a particular theme. Past themes included wildflowers, tools of music, water and snakes. This year's theme was selected because, according to Jim Whelan, museum director, "so much of what we do begins with flipping a switch." Twenty-five hands-on stations were created to allow visitors to touch, generate and explore electricity.

"Whatever the theme, the museum tries to get local businesses involved," Duhon says.

Whelan agrees the project is a joint effort with the community. "We rely on outside resources, like





Gulf States, to help make these programs work," says Whelan, who contacted GSU last August about the exhibit.

Duhon says GSU's contribution includes technical expertise, prop design and information about nuclear and coal power.

May 16 is designated GSU Employee Day. "That morning, the exhibit will be open free-of-charge to our employees and their families," Duhon says. "Later in the afternoon, we will have a bucket truck and some linemen at the museum as part of the exhibit."

Some of the display stations include a pedal generator (visitors furiously hand-crank a generator to keep lights glowing), short circuit (observers watch as a thin wire heats to a glowing red and then disappears as it burns away), lightning fury

(visitors use their fingers to sculpt and twist lightning under a dome of glass) and the tesla coil (onlookers watch the sparks, hear the crackle and smell the ozone while fluorescent bulbs glow in their hands).

Museum officials are pleased with the public response. "The attendance has been very busy on weekends," Whelan says. "We also get a lot of tourists from outlying areas."

Cliff Deal, exhibit curator, says a large number of school groups have visited the museum, and he expects the number to increase as the school year closes. "We've had all age groups come through," he says.

Duhon teaches a summer electric institute for the University of Southwestern Louisiana and plans on taking participants to the museum. "Although the show is geared toward children, the hands-on experience is good for everyone," Duhon says.

Any GSU customer may pick up a half-price coupon in the Lake Charles, Lafayette and Baton Rouge offices. Employees may also obtain the half-price discount by calling Duhon at 746-2274.

*Top left, a popular display at the electricity exhibit is the Finger Tingler. While touching the copper plates with her fingers, the student turns the phone generator which delivers a mild shock to her fingers. Above, visitors create a current with their own hands at the Hand Battery. An electrochemical reaction is developed as the salty dampness of the boy's hands comes in contact with copper and aluminum plates.*



The People To See For The  
For Ideal Aquaculture  
Gulf States Utilities

## Tropical fish take up residence in warm Lewis Creek waters

story and photo by Susan Gilley

Lewis Creek Station is known for helping to power people's homes. A non-GSU business slated to begin operating at the power plant site later this year will specialize in fueling people's bodies.

In late 1991, Ultra-Fish Inc., a Little Rock, Ark.-based company, announced that it would move its headquarters to the Lewis Creek grounds. Ultra-Fish President Charles Gilbert told **Plain Talks** the project is on target, with officials expecting to receive all necessary permits within two or three months.

Ultra-Fish is the outgrowth of detailed research on the most environmentally-safe, efficient and economical ways to grow clean, healthy fish, Gilbert explained. Although the company is now seeking financing to cover the cost of the venture, Ultra-Fish plans to raise tilapia completely indoors. The firm will use the warm water produced by the power plant as part of its fish production process. Tilapia, a tropical fish, needs carefully-regulated warm water to thrive. The water will be filtered before it is returned to the Lewis Creek reservoir, meaning there will be no adverse environmental impact from the enterprise.

Ultra-Fish expects to hire more than 100 local residents to staff the facility, which should begin operating before the end of 1992, Gilbert added.

Gilbert said he derives satisfaction from the idea that tilapia produced at the planned facility should help solve the world hunger problem. The process to be used at Ultra-Fish will turn the fish into food faster than was previously possible. Inside the facility, tilapia will be brought from the egg to the frozen fillet stage, with the fish maturing in about 12 months.

Perry Walker, plant superintendent for Lewis Creek, said, "Electricity will certainly continue to be GSU's main priority here, but we are pleased that by leasing the land to Ultra-Fish, we can help in the creation of some jobs for the Willis area."

L to R, John Bordelon, administrator-Team City; Charles Gilbert, Ultra-Fish president, and Carolyn Motl, economic development research analyst, discuss plans at the 1991 Texas Aquaculture Conference and Trade Show in Corpus Christi, Texas.

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*"...we are pleased that by leasing the land to Ultra-Fish, we can help in the creation of some jobs..."*

**Perry Walker**

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## Radio audience tunes in, dials up GSU foresters



story and photos by Pris Gallagher

"Hello, Steve. Welcome to the Home and Garden Show."

"I have a cow oak that I want to transplant. Is this the wrong time of year to transplant or what should I do? I plan to plant it away from my power lines."

"How big is your tree, Steve?"

"It's not big. About 6 feet."

"Well, Steve, the best time of year to transplant your tree is the middle of the winter, when it is dormant, but I'm not going to tell you not to transplant your tree now...Norman, tell us, how big is that tree going to get?"

"Louis, a cow oak is a large tree. It can get 65 to 70 feet in height and reach a diameter of three to five feet. The crown can easily have a spread of 60 to 65 feet."

And so it went the afternoon that Norman Kinsella and Phil Waller, both GSU foresters, were the guests on the Home and Garden Show on WJBO radio in Baton Rouge.

Kinsella was able to stress his point — plan before you plant — to the caller Steve. But not only that, the two foresters were able to share with their audience that GSU is concerned with providing reliable electric service and sometimes trees are planted too close to power lines and can be a continuing problem for both the homeowner and GSU.

It's part of the forestry department's aggressive consumer education program. They're holding meetings with elected officials and civic organizations to explain tree-trimming procedures and hosting dinners for local nurserymen and arborists to help spread the company message of "Plan Before You Plant." They recently distributed posters to the local nurseries recommending what trees to plant and where to plant them, with emphasis on the size of the tree when fully mature and its proximity to power lines.

The hour-long talk show, rapidly becoming a Baton Rouge favorite, is hosted by Louis Miller, a horticulturist who spends six days a week as the local radio expert on everything from battling beetles to potting petunias.

"And we have Jill on line two. Welcome, Jill."

"What can I do to get my neighbor to cut his dead tree down to the ground? It is close to a power line."

"I'm going to pitch this question to the fellows from Gulf States."

"Jill, call your local GSU office and we'll send someone to inspect the tree. If it is a hazard to our lines, we need to get it down," answered Waller.

"Will they cut it to the ground?" questioned Jill.

"Not necessarily. Usually we can just trim it away from the lines. What kind of a tree is it?"

"A dead one," replied Jill.

Waller never missed a beat as he calmly suggested she give our office a call. "If it's a threat to our lines, we'll trim it. If it's not on our servitude, but is on private property, we'll check it and be sure it can be safely removed by a private tree contractor."

Bob was the next caller. He asked about planting a river birch on the west side of his home to help save energy in the summer. He added it would be at least 35 feet away from both the house and the power lines. Kinsella agreed that would be a good choice. He used the opportunity to add several other suggestions for shade trees and ideas for creating a wind shield for blocking the north wind during the winter.

But not all the callers had serious tree problems that Monday.



*Top, L to R, Host Louis Miller, Norman Kinsella and Phil Waller answer call-in questions on "The Home and Garden Show" on WJBO radio in Baton Rouge. Above, Waller talks to a caller about trimming trees near power lines.*

Margaret was worried because her ivy topiary was drying out and turning brown. She also asked a second question about what to do with the poinsettia she received as a Christmas present.

Mary had a question about brown patch on her St. Augustine grass.

However, the show ended with more questions on trees and an invitation to come back again in the fall.



# NEWS BRIEFS



John Newton, general substation supervisor, Beaumont, checks moisture, vacuum and temperature readings of used transformer oil being processed in GSU's newest self-contained transformer oil purification and drying system. The unit removes dirt and particles, improves dielectric breakdown voltage and reduces water and gas content in used oil so it can be used again. In the past year, Gulf States has processed oil in several breakers and transformers which could have resulted in major failures if they had gone unattended. Photo by Mike Rodgers.



The Corporate Communications department recently earned awards for their work from The Press Club of Southeast Texas at their 1992 Excellence in Media awards ceremony. Betty Gavora, supervisor-employee communications, (center) took home first place in Publications-Internal for a recruitment brochure; Scott Harper, employee communications representative, (right) won second place in Publications-Internal for the December 1991 issue of *Plain Talks*. Harper also won second place in Public Relations Programs for The Reddy Rhythms, GSU's volunteer entertainment group. Mike Rodgers, senior employee communications representative, (left) earned third place in Magazine Articles for his feature story on GSU skydivers in the November 1991 issue of *Plain Talks*. Congratulations! Photo by Mark Viguet.



Charlie Grady, national alternate, NAPM, (l) presents Holstead with the award.

## Holstead receives NAPM recognition

Rose Holstead, senior purchasing agent, Beaumont, was named "Outstanding Member of the Year" for 1991-92 by the National Association of Purchasing Management - Sabine Neches Association (NAPM).

Holstead, who joined the group in 1980, was the 1990-91 President. She has served NAPM in other leadership positions as well. In 1982, she became the first woman in the local association to earn the designation of Certified Purchasing Manager (C.P.M.).

During her presidential term, she worked to establish a satellite association in Lake Charles which now boasts 16 regular members. She also helped organize a seminar for the association, "Strategic Alliances in Purchasing."

Under her leadership, the organization held it's First Annual Golf Tournament to establish a scholarship fund. To encourage better attendance, she instituted a perfect attendance award which nine members have received. To encourage members to become more involved in C.P.M. certification, she created a library of study materials.



# ON THE MOVE

## Promotions from February 1 - 29, 1992

- Ballard, Troy A., Jr.**, River Bend, to electrician 1st class-nuclear, Plant Production (1).
- Beach, Susan W.**, Baton Rouge, to customer contact clerk, Division Accounting (3).
- Benson, Michael A.**, Beaumont, to supervisor-division engineering, T&D Engineering (12).
- Biagas, Mark L.**, Nelson Station, to electrician 2nd class, Plant Production (4 months).
- Brouillette, Stephen L.**, Beaumont, to director-budgeting and field accounting, Accounting Services (14).
- Brown, Bruce E.**, Baton Rouge, to senior meter reader, Division Accounting (12).
- Carley, Terri S.**, Baton Rouge, to section head, Division Accounting (8).
- Clark, Daniel R.**, Beaumont, to senior accountant, Accounting Services (10).
- Cobb, Carol J.**, River Bend, to instructional technologist, RBNG-Administration (5).
- Collins, Karen M.**, Beaumont, to senior accountant, Accounting Services (12).
- Davis, Lawrence S.**, Beaumont, to operating superintendent, Beaumont T&D (16).
- Faulk, Haywood N.**, Lafayette, to apprentice-line and service departments, Electric T&D (2).
- Frazier, Henry L.**, Nelson Station, to equipment operator, Plant Production (10).
- Hays, Paula S.**, River Bend, to nuclear chemistry technician 1st class, Plant Production (1).
- Hebert, Thomas J.**, Willow Glen, to mechanical maintenance foreman, Plant Production (9).
- Jaetzold, Trent B.**, Nelson Station, to equipment operator, Plant Production (3).
- James, Nathaniel**, Conroe, to apprentice-line and service departments, Electric T&D (1).
- Jordan, Billy R.**, River Bend, to senior planning and scheduling specialist, RBNG-Plant Operations (4).
- King, Sharon D.**, Beaumont, to senior systems analyst, Computer Applications (7).
- Little, Todd J.**, Willow Glen, to test technician 2nd class, Plant Production (2).
- Luther, William G.**, Beaumont, to director-standards, Engineering Standards (13).
- McRaney, Vernon F.**, Baton Rouge, to collector, Division Accounting (13).
- Merritt, Robert W., Jr.**, Sabine Station, to repairman 2nd class, Plant Production (10).
- Murphy, Randall W.**, Beaumont, to utility worker II, General Services (2).
- Napier, Katheryn J.**, Lafayette, to meter reader, Division Accounting (2).
- Norton, Danny J.**, Orange, to lineman 2nd class, Electric T&D (8).
- Onofry, Ronnie D.**, Louisiana Station, to mechanical maintenance supervisor, Plant Production (10).
- Perry, Boyd A.**, River Bend, to senior planning and scheduling specialist, RBNG-Plant Operations (5).
- Runnels, Catherine W.**, Beaumont, to supervisor-system billing, Accounting Services (7).
- Schaper, David L.**, Beaumont, to coordinator-business systems, Accounting Services (6).
- Simien, Dianna C.**, Nelson Station, to equipment operator, Plant Production (13).
- Singletary, Billy T.**, The Woodlands, to lineman 3rd class, Electric T&D, (4).
- Smith, Philip R.**, Beaumont, to manager-technical accounting and budgeting, Accounting Services (16).
- Spencer, James A.**, Beaumont, to supervisor-transmission construction, Engineering (13).
- Stevens, Kathryn H.**, Beaumont, to supervisor-benefits administration, Human Resources (2).
- Tisdale, Sandra C.**, River Bend, to training associate, RBNG-Administration (5).
- Trahan, David W.**, Lake Charles, to test foreman, Plant Production-Nelson Gas & Oil (10).
- Tyrone, Henderson G.**, Willow Glen, to control operations foreman, Plant Production (14).
- Whittington, Lloyd A.**, Beaumont, to director-shareholder services, Corporate Services (11).

( )denotes years of service



# SERVICE ANNIVERSARIES

February

# 1992

## 40 YEARS

**Thomas R. Whiddon Jr.**  
Executive Department  
Beaumont

## 30 YEARS

**Larry E. Beasley**  
Plant Production  
Louisiana Station  
**Bobby J. Willis**  
Executive Department  
Beaumont

## 20 YEARS

**Jesse Guinn III**  
Plant Production  
Louisiana Station  
**Donald K. Vessier**  
Electric T&D  
Baton Rouge

## 10 YEARS

**Robert M. Adams Jr.**  
Corporate Communications  
Beaumont  
**Dale W. Babineaux**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Coal  
**Daniel R. Blanchard Jr.**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Coal  
**Randall P. Broussard**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Coal  
**Donald G. Goodwin**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Coal  
**William T. Marcantel**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Coal

**Gary D. Rumby**  
Plant Production  
Sabine Station  
**William B. Reeves**  
Plant Production  
Louisiana Station  
**Camelia C. Martin**  
Plant Production  
Sabine Station  
**Jerry M. Babin**  
Plant Production  
Willow Glen  
**Perry M. Sullivan**  
Plant Production  
Willow Glen  
**David K. Benoit**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Station  
**Everette L. Brisendine Jr.**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Coal  
**Bobby G. Courvelle**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Coal  
**Jacqueline H. Duhon**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Coal  
**Lloyd K. Gibbs**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Coal  
**Monroe L. Hooper**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Coal  
**Eric P. Kling**  
Plant Production  
Willow Glen  
**Bobby W. Kunecke**  
Plant Production  
Sabine Station  
**Ronnie D. Onofry**  
Plant Production  
Louisiana Station  
**Jerry L. Rhodus**  
Plant Production  
Willow Glen  
**Wilma A. Shaw**  
Electric T&D  
Beaumont  
**Joseph A. Webb**  
Division Operations  
Beaumont  
**Robert L. Caswell Jr.**  
Electric T&D  
Lake Charles

**Martin A. Depoy**  
Plant Production  
Willow Glen  
**Kevin N. Gauthreaux**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Coal  
**Danny H. Gentry**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Coal  
**Wilson J. Levings Jr.**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Coal  
**J. Lee Miller**  
Executive Department  
Beaumont  
**Wilton S. Netterville Jr.**  
Electric T&D  
Beaumont  
**Jeffrey D. Walker**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Coal  
**Melvin R. Wilks**  
Plant Production  
Sabine Station  
**Russell J. Severson**  
Plant Production  
Sabine Station  
**Wanda K. Toparcean**  
Accounting Services  
Beaumont  
**Norma N. Brown**  
Division Accounting  
Huntsville  
**William W. Chenevert**  
Plant Production  
Nelson Station  
**Julius M. Clark III**  
Bus Systems & Oversight  
River Bend  
**Kathryn L. Powell**  
Division Accounting  
Beaumont  
**Herman F. Rogers**  
Marketing  
Beaumont  
**Dorothy M. Savage**  
Financial Services  
Beaumont  
**Paul Ray Suddath Jr.**  
Plant Production  
Sabine Station  
**William D. Thornhill**  
Plant Production  
Willow Glen





## The best solution to problems? Employees.

by Kim McMurray

Laurel Barton is a GSU departmental clerk in Conroe, but on this particular day she's complaining because her lights have been out three times in the last week.

Ernest Henderson reads meters for GSU in Navasota, but he wants to know why his bill was estimated. After all, his dog never bites.

Baiba Warren is a GSU collector in Conroe, but it's been several hours since she paid her bill and her electricity still isn't on.

Betty Wheaton is a customer contact clerk in GSU's Conroe office. She's upset because she paid her bill but received a disconnect notice anyway.

Renee Stone, GSU customer affairs coordinator in Conroe, is upset because she couldn't pay her bill at the drive-through one day when it was raining. She didn't have the bill with her, so she had to park and go inside to get a duplicate.

Joe Gorney, Gulf States service foreman in Conroe, simply wonders if GSU's right hand always knows what the left hand is doing.

\* \* \*

These Gulf Staters didn't really have these experiences, but they know some customers do. Laurel, Ernest, Renee, Baiba, Betty and Joe played these customer roles a few weeks ago as members of a Western Division problem-solving team.

The team spent several months looking at ways the company could enhance customer satisfaction. Marketing Supervisor Greg Shepard headed the group, which did its role-playing as part of its final report at a management presentation I attended a few weeks ago.

Customer satisfaction also was the topic of problem-solving teams that have made similar reports in recent months in the Beaumont and Port Arthur divisions.

There's no question that the overwhelming majority of our customers are satisfied with the service they receive from GSU employees. We know from ongoing surveys that 80 to 90 percent of our customers say they are satisfied with GSU's accessibility, response time, the employees they dealt with and the company as a whole.

That does not mean, however, that our customer contact employees are as lonely as the Maytag repairman. A small group of unhappy customers can, and do, keep a lot of



our employees busy. A short visit to any local office makes that very obvious. The phones are usually ringing off the wall with a variety of questions, requests or complaints.

Some customers call regularly. It's almost like they have their phones programmed to dial the nearest GSU office automatically. Some of the regular callers are lonely, some are professional pickers of nits and some just like to complain.

Some customers have legitimate questions or complaints. Many calls come from customers who simply don't understand their bills or have a question about some company policy or something we've sent them, such as a disconnect notice. Some have their questions answered satisfactorily or their complaint resolved. Some don't.

If you get a chance to participate in, or hear a presentation by, a problem-solving team, don't pass it up. Pardon me for sounding hokey, but listening to the Western Division group made me proud to be a Gulf Stater. Those employees' dedication and commitment to helping our customers was obvious. They took their mission seriously and their enthusiasm was contagious.

As the October 1991 **Plain Talks** reported, there have been problem-solving teams working in areas other than customer satisfaction. The reports from those sessions have been equally positive. (Although the participants are the keys, the Human Resources people who coordinate these sessions — Jim Kelly, Frances Engelbrecht and Ed Turner — also deserve a round of applause.)

The division teams that looked at customer satisfaction made specific recommendations about steps they believe the company can take to reduce the number of customer calls and complaints and make our customers think even more favorably toward the company. Now their recommendations will be analyzed both at the corporate and division levels.

The beauty of team problem-solving is that the group members know the problems first-hand. They deal with them every day. Laurel, Joe, Ernest, Renee, Baiba, Betty and Greg and all the others work with customers all the time and have a unique perspective about how those who use our services react to and are affected by GSU's policies, procedures and people.

Some policies and procedures probably will be changed. In the people department, it's obvious that we're doing just fine, thank you.



# PLAIN TALKS

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*Marathon racers reach the finish line of the Houston-Tenneco Marathon. Several Gulf Staters completed the 26-mile race held last January. For more information, see page 3. Photo courtesy of Tenneco, Inc.*



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